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ABSTRACT

This document reports data from program evaluation questionnaires completed by supervisors, administrators, teachers, students, and parents. Administrators most frequently mentioned problems centered around the areas of communication and reporting pupil progress. The most conspicuous needs are more frequent and more effective explanations of the school program. Teachers' requests for help in grouping techniques, scheduling, and reporting pupil progress were numerous; many asked for guidance in establishing a continuum of skills in subject areas other than reading and mathematics. A large number of students responded favorably to small group work and independent activities. The majority of the parents who responded indicated that their children had evidenced greater interest in school work since the initiation of the continuous progress program. A related document is EA 003 634. (Author/MLF)

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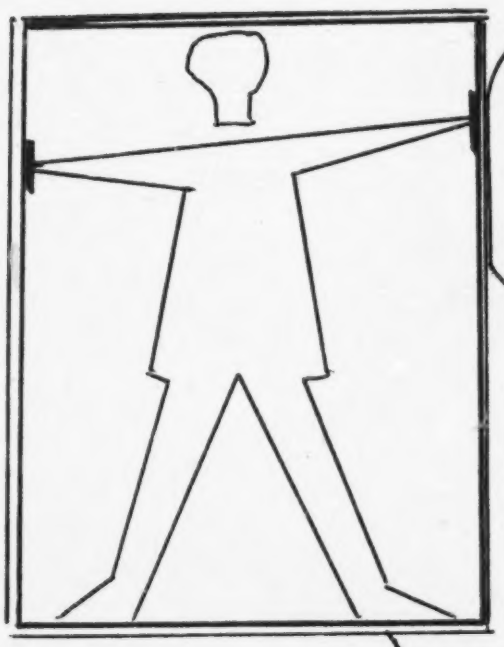

Continuous PROGRESS PROGRAM SURVEY REPORT

DIOCESE OF PITTSBURGH

May, 1971

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PREFACE

After fifteen years of serious experimentation with the nongraded program in some of the Catholic Schools of the Diocese of Pittsburgh, the Board of Supervisors petitioned and received permission from Bishop John B. McDowell, then Superintendent of Catholic Schools, to implement a Continuous Progress Program in the schools. In order that the transition might be made with the highest degree of proficiency, a Nongraded Committee consisting of Sister Mary Judith Seman, VSC, Estelle Murphy, Sister Irene Mannella, OSF, Sister Mary Claver Paustenbach, CDP, and Sister Mary Damian Thaner, OSB, was formed. This Committee has spent considerable time explaining the philosophy and the methodology of implementation to administrators, teachers, and parents throughout the diocese.

After the program had been in operation for over a year, the Board of Supervisors felt it would be wise to make a formal evaluation of the program. The Nongraded Committee designed questionnaires which were completed by supervisors, administrators, teachers, students, and parents. The questionnaires for the students and parents contained questions which, for the most part, indicated attitudes toward the Continuous Progress Program. Those for the supervisors, administrators, and teachers were more objective and reflected the proficiency of operation.

Since a number of people spent many hours completing the forms, it is only proper that the results of the survey be published. Again, we must express our gratitude to the Nongraded Committee for the endless hours spent in compiling and publishing the results of the survey. A special note of gratitude is extended to the supervisors, administrators, teachers, students, and parents without whose cooperation and dedication the survey could not have been completed.

Mr. John T. Cicco
Superintendent of Catholic Schools

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SELF-STUDY: THE PROGRAM IN PERSPECTIVE

As far back as 1956 several pilot schools in the Diocese of Pittsburgh had begun experimenting in nongradedness. Many success stories evolved as teachers and students in these schools worked to make continuous progress a reality. It was hoped that an extention of the philosophy these pilot schools had created would be incorporated into all the schools of the system.

As a first step toward making this dream a reality, continuous progress Programs in Reading and Mathematics were initiated September, 1969, in all elementary schools of the Diocese. Positive actions were taken to acquaint administrators, teachers, and parents with the philosophy and the mechanics of this plan. The aim of the program was to provide that unique type of school structure in which the needs of all students would be met and the continuous, sequential progress of each student would be assured. Since every child is different, the plan called for teaching and evaluating each student on the basis of his own potential and his own achievement. Progress had to be made and judged in terms of the student's own learning rate and in terms of his own abilities. To do this effectively, all grade labels and grade barriers had to be eliminated.

PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

Almost two years have elapsed since the Continuous Progress Program formally went into effect in the Diocese of Pittsburgh. During that time, most schools have changed dramatically. Some principals and faculty members showed themselves to be more courageous and more creative while some admittedly had a Continuous Progress Program in name only. Verbal feedback from principals' meetings, faculty in-service days, and PTG meetings showed that there was and still is great interest in the program.

In order to improve and to build on the work of the past two year, school officials believed it was time now to get written reactions from all those who are involved. This study is a summary of the evaluation conducted by the Non-graded Committee in the Diocese. The proposed study had as its purposes:

1. To evaluate the recommendations made by the Nongraded Committee at the initiation of the Continuous Progress Program
2. To ascertain the degree to which each school had implemented the program
3. To examine how local schools had adapted vertical and horizontal structures to meet the needs of individual students
4. To receive and to disseminate information--pro and con--concerning reactions from supervisors, administrators, teachers, students, and parents
5. To use the information derived from the questionnaires in planning future workshops and in-service programs

PROCEDURE

In order to draw as complete a picture of the Continuous Progress Program as possible, the members of the Nongraded Committee found it necessary to secure information from supervisors, administrators (principals, supervisory principals, building principals), teachers, students, and parents. (See Appendix)

In January, 1971, individual copies of checklists were provided for supervisors, administrators, and teachers. Principals received one copy of the students' with one copy of the parents' checklists and were asked to duplicate the number needed for their schools. Since the response of students and parents is of great interest in each local situation, principals were asked to tally the results and summarize the comments from their respective schools. The questionnaires completed by supervisors, principals, and teachers and the final totals from students' and parents' checklists were returned to the members of the Nongraded Committee by March, 1971. The tabulations of the checklists are shown in the Appendix.

INTERPRETATION OF THE STUDY

Of the 182 elementary schools in the Diocese, 179 responded. This figure includes five principals who stated that they have no Continuous Progress Program in their schools. However, two of these principals indicated that they are using an Open Classroom type of organizational structure. Two of the remaining three schools that did not respond have special inner-city programs.

Since most of the questions in the checklists reflect attitudes, an effort was made to discern trends that have contributed to effective Continuous Progress Programs. Hopefully, the sharing of this information will encourage and stimulate efforts toward creative and imaginative programs.

One point that bears emphasis because of the frequent checklist indicators is that principals and teachers are doing a much better job than that for which they are willing to take credit. Undeniably, students have become participants rather than spectators in the learning process. The following analysis gives testimony to these truths.

SUPERVISORS

The supervisors section of the Continuous Progress Program survey was concerned with teachers and their techniques, the use of materials, the general classroom atmosphere, and recommendations for in-service sessions. An effort was made also to determine attitudes concerning the effectiveness of home-school communication through parent-teacher conferences.

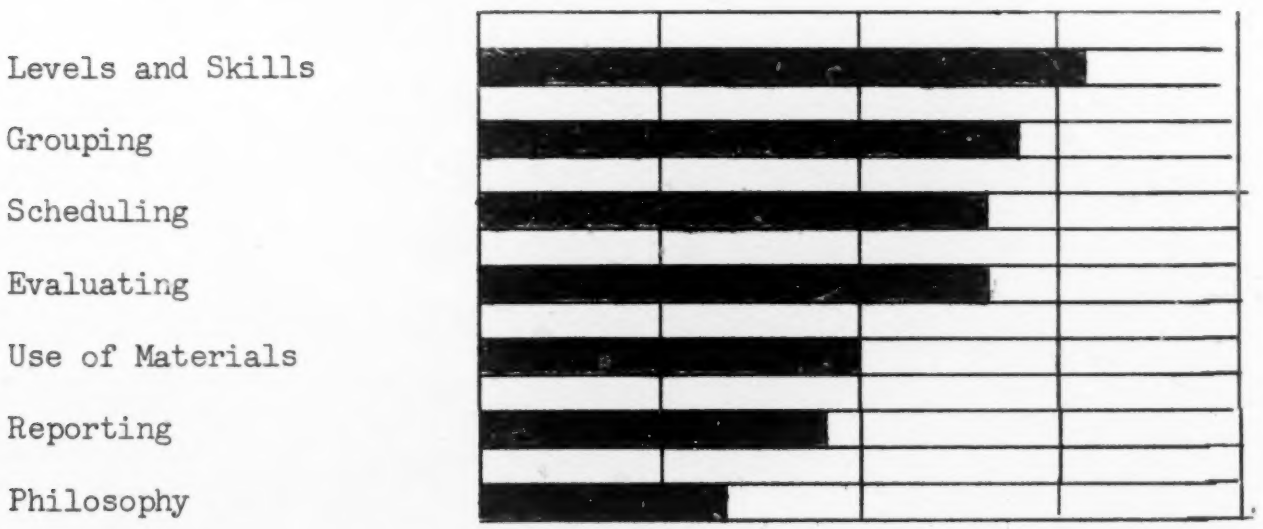
Of the eighteen supervisors who responded, a majority indicated that teachers do understand the philosophy of nongradedness and very definitely had taken steps to improve groupings, scheduling, use of materials, and techniques. However, tallies did not actually emphasize the fact that teachers are happier in the Continuous Progress Program. Neither did the supervisors section of the survey show that students are developing a greater sense of responsibility. Some of the comments indicated that the supervisors feel questions dealing with attitudes need to be qualified. It seems that a classification of teachers according to subject areas being taught and age groups being instructed would have helped to clarify the responses.

The survey indicated that faculty attitudes reflect a definite concern for meeting the needs of students. The concern for each student's progress, as well as concern for the accurate measurement of his academic achievement, quite possibly accounted for a greater variety of instructional materials being used. A large number of supervisors believe that parent-teacher conferences have been helpful in communicating pupil progress and achievement. They did not feel, however, that most teachers are interpreting the report card in the light of the philosophy of the Continuous Progress Program.

The Supervisors agreed that teachers would profit from further in-service training. They indicated that sessions in the areas of levels and skills,

grouping, scheduling, and evaluating would be of greatest benefit to the faculties with whom they work. The accompanying graph shows the supervisors' order of preference for the suggested in-service topics listed on the checklist.

SUPERVISORS PREFERENCES FOR IN-SERVICE SESSIONS



In commenting on the strengths of the program, a number of supervisors stated that teachers are becoming more student-conscious and less textbook-bound. It was mentioned many times that the quality and the quantity of instructional materials have improved considerably in most schools since the initiation of the program.

An obvious weakness, as the supervisors see it, is the incorrect interpretation by many teachers of the levels and the skills in the Reading and the Mathematics programs. An important need at this time is greater flexibility in grouping and scheduling. A better understanding of pupil-evaluation procedures would also be helpful in communicating with parents.

In general, the supervisors believe that much good has been effected in the past two years. In schools where there is a united faculty, truly creative and stimulating programs have emerged.

ADMINISTRATORS

Response to the administrators survey checklist were received from 190 persons including principals, supervisory principals, building principals, and vice-principals. A few who are still responsible for the positions of both principal and teacher questioned which role they should consider when answering the survey. The Nongraded Committee had hoped to receive reactions from both viewpoints, but it is difficult to distinguish the choice or choices made by these individuals. Since the percentage of principals who responded as teachers instead of as administrators is small, it is conceivable that the decision to answer one or both checklists exercised little influence in the final tallies.

Administrators were asked to consider three aspects of the Continuous Progress Program in their schools. Questions concerning broad or general items were grouped under the headings: Curriculum, Communication, and Evaluation. Since nongrading is concerned with these, serious self-analysis on the local level was considered necessary. The survey results emphasize the fact that our principals do have great interest in the program and are eager to improve in the three listed areas.

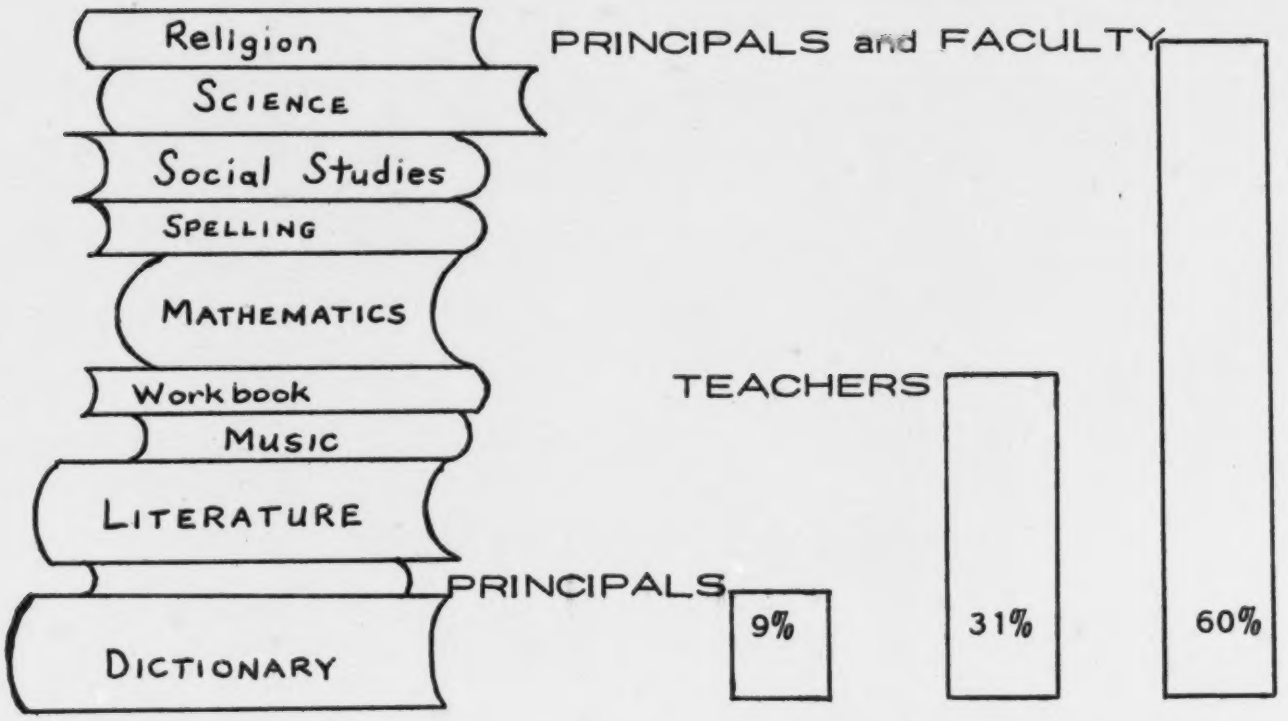
CURRICULUM

In the Curriculum section of the survey, the implementation of the Continuous Progress Program at a given school was studied. The responses were very positive in acknowledging that principals are kept informed concerning student movement within groups and among classes. Principals are aware of the levels being taught by each teacher. According to the survey, a majority of principals have provided every faculty member with a copy of the GUIDELINES FOR THE CONTINUOUS PROGRESS PROGRAM.

In a few instances, the necessity of having the Guidelines for teachers other than those of Reading and Mathematics was questioned. However, every teacher regardless of subject area must have an understanding of the philosophy of the Continuous Progress Program in order to evaluate the student's progress and interpret it to the parents.

It is evident that most principals devote time at faculty meetings for discussions and further implementation of the nongraded philosophy. Approximately 66 percent reported that instructional materials are being used to the best advantage. Another 33 percent admitted the absence of an instructional materials center. This could, no doubt, influence the apparent infrequent use of multi-media materials as reflected in the survey. Comments indicated that when texts and audio-visual materials are stored in a centrally located place, they were used much more efficiently and effectively. In those schools where lists of available instructional materials were disseminated, teachers seemed more apt to use these supplementary aids.

Scheduling that includes the flexibility to meet individual needs caused some questioning. A majority of the administrators stated that present programs are flexible. In implementing the program, however, principals believed that greater assistance, better suggestions, and more study are needed in the restructuring and the reorganization process. One checklist item asked principals to list the person or persons involved in constructing the schedule. A minority of principals reported that they themselves had arranged the class schedules. A larger number of principals responded that the teachers in the various departments did the structuring. In the majority of cases, the schedule was planned by both the administrator and the teachers. Personnel involvement in the scheduling process is shown in the accompanying graph.



It has been found that sharing and cooperating in schedule construction produces a more workable timetable which meets the needs of both students and teachers. The majority of principals believed that flexibility can be achieved only when all involved are really a part of the scheduling process.

COMMUNICATION

Effective communication is one of the best means of insuring the success of any program. This section of the checklist attempted to survey types of communication used by the principals who participated in the study. Annual faculty in-service sessions for the Continuous Progress Program were conducted in 66 percent of the schools. The survey shows that much stress was placed on the use of printed materials as a medium of communication. The teachers, because they are directly associated with the program, received the greatest amount of exposure through available literature, the Guidelines, and bulletins.

According to the responses of the administrators, parents ranked second and students last in receiving printed information. The checklist responses indicated that the general public was made aware of the existing program in only a few isolated instances. (See Appendix)

Inquiries made about orientation sessions for parents of new students indicated that only 42 percent of the principals have conducted such sessions. This is a disturbing element because most principals agree that an understanding of the program does not come automatically with a few words of explanation or the signing of an entrance form. Principals' comment gave the impression that the parents of students presently enrolled in our schools are asking for more information and for additional explanations. Better provision must be made to increase and to improve communication in this area.

EVALUATION

The Evaluation section tallies of the survey contained items pertaining to testing and reporting. The necessity of using standardized test results in evaluating continuous progress was questioned by many principals. It seems that many administrators are not in favor of the testing schedule used in the Diocese because a large percentage indicated that they would like an option in the choice of tests and in the time for administering them. The tallies gave evidence that tests other than standardized are being used as evaluation tools. The Basic Reader Tests prepared by various publishing companies ranked highest in the types used by teachers to determine skill mastery at a particular level. Mathematics Mastery Tests which accompany published mathematics programs and Level-Skill Tests prepared by groups of teachers were also well used. (See Appendix)

The tallies for faculty and parental understanding of the philosophy of the report card showed that this area of the survey created doubts. Adminis-

trators indicated some teacher weakness in interpreting the currently used forms. According to principals, less than 30 percent of the parents are credited with a good knowledge of the philosophy of the report card. This is difficult to explain in view of the responses on the parents checklist. The responses given by the principals to the questions which referred to parental and faculty understanding of the philosophy of the report cards were in some cases contradictory.

One fact, however, is certain. The parent-teacher conferences were well received. Principals strongly agreed that the conferences added to the effectiveness of the Continuous Progress Program. Although in some instances, principals expressed the desire to use only parent-teacher conferences and to eliminate the written report card as a means of communicating pupil progress, the strong majority of administrators do not feel that parents are well enough informed for such action.

SUMMARY OF COMMENTS

The comments concerning school atmosphere and school attitude aided in the interpretation of the tallies. Many principals see their programs as more challenging, enabling teachers and students to work without undue pressure. They sense that most teachers enjoy meeting different groups of students during the course of the school day. Students seem to be profiting from the individual attention they are receiving. Through the variety of texts and the additional instructional materials, principals have become more aware of the great interest for learning that can be generated when administration, faculty, and students work together for a common good.

The most frequently mentioned problems centered around the areas of communication and reporting pupil progress. It seems that the most conspicuous

needs at this time are more frequent and more effective explanations of the school program--its philosophy, its horizontal and vertical structure, its evaluation and procedures.

Adjustment to the Continuous Progress Program has been gradual but satisfying. Strange as it may seem, the students are the program's best public-relations agents. The majority of teachers are experiencing success, but quite naturally, some are more enthusiastic than others. The general impression from the comments on checklists was that primary teachers are very pleased with the program; intermediate teachers are being converted to new ways of thinking and planning; upper elementary teachers are still questioning, re-grouping, and re-scheduling.

PROFESSIONAL STAFF

The 2011 professional staff checklists returned represented 71 percent of the teachers in the Diocese of Pittsburgh. Teachers from all departments in the school--primary, intermediate, and upper elementary--were included in the study. The teaching experience of the respondents ranged from less than one year to beyond 50 years. No attempt was made, however, to differentiate the responses of teachers with more experience from those with less experience. Neither was any effort made to categorize responses according to primary, intermediate, and upper elementary departments. Since the Continuous Progress Program is only in its second year on a Diocesan-wide scale, it did not seem necessary to differentiate and categorize at this time.

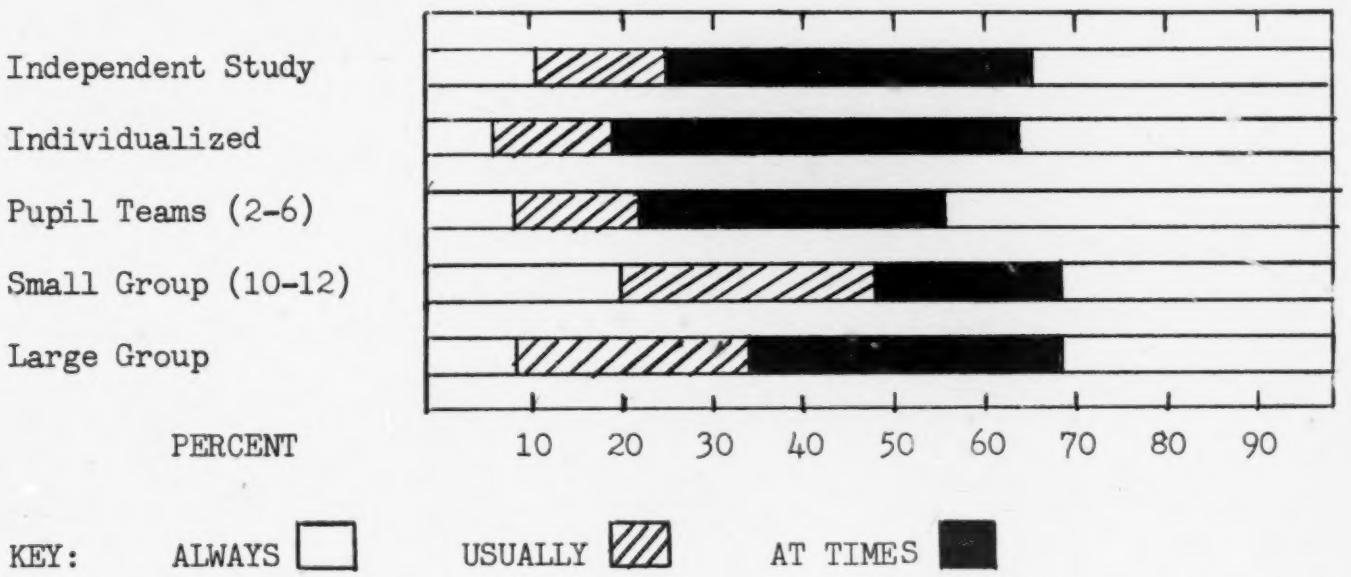
PROVISIONS FOR INDIVIDUAL DIFFERENCES

That individual differences of students are not only recognized, but accepted and planned for, is a basic tenet of the Continuous Progress philosophy. An easily discerned trend indicated that the majority of teachers are endeavoring to discover each pupil's strong and weak points. This was evident in the first question of the survey to which 46 percent of the teachers checked ALWAYS and 45 percent checked USUALLY.

Subsequent items in the checklist showed that in most cases teachers introduced the skills and the concepts on the basis of pupil-needs as determined by observation and/or diagnosis of performance. However, it appears that the opportunities provided by teachers for individual pupils to pursue problems and projects on the basis of special interest or special need were not as pronounced as was the awareness of individual differences. (See Appendix)

The techniques used to facilitate the meeting of pupils' needs were questioned as to frequency of use. The accompanying graph illustrates the manner and the frequency of teacher-attempts to personalize instruction for students in our schools as found in this study.

USE OF PERSONALIZED INSTRUCTION TECHNIQUES



There was an approximate 25 percent NO RESPONSE total for each of the listed techniques. A very small number indicated that the listed techniques were NEVER used. In general, the survey revealed that much experimentation is in progress. The horizontal structure of the school is gradually taking on a new look.

CONTINUOUS PROGRESS

Continuous progress is the essence of nongrading. In this part of the survey, teachers were asked how they were providing for the continuous progress of each child. More than 65 percent of the responding teachers indicated that pupils were given many opportunities to work at their own instructional levels. The needs of faster moving students as well as those of students requiring more time for particular concepts and skills are receiving adequate attention.

Teachers are providing opportunities for students to forge ahead in areas of special strengths. A comparable number of teachers indicated that special adjustments had been made for students needing an extended period of time at any given level. (See Appendix)

An 86 percent response showed that pupil progress is being evaluated in terms of personal progress rather than progress in relation to a group. However, the manner of communicating pupil progress was highly controversial. In answer to the question, "Do you ever feel that the written report card should be eliminated?" the responses were:

27%	ALWAYS
8%	USUALLY
33%	AT TIMES
23%	NEVER
9%	NO RESPONSE

The tallies showed that there were almost as many teachers in favor of keeping the report card as there were teachers who want to do away with it. The large number who responded USUALLY and AT TIMES plus the number who made no response emphasizes the fact that teachers really are not sure if the written report is the best way of communicating information about pupil progress.

Some teachers who commented on this question stated that they believe parent-teacher conferences were more effective in communicating pupil progress. Others felt that a written report card was helpful but they did not particularly care for the form currently used. It must be explained that much of the dissatisfaction that has arisen can be traced to the frequent report card changes in the Diocese. Within the past six years, there have been at least four different forms in various departments of the elementary school.

INSTRUCTIONAL MATERIALS

At the initiation of the Continuous Progress Program, a number of teachers feared that it would be ineffective because of a dearth of textbooks and materials in some schools. It is interesting to note that checklist results show that the majority of teachers feel that in their schools there is a range of instructional materials wide enough to meet the varying needs of each pupil. The survey reveals, however, that the use of multi-media materials and the use of a variety of textbooks are not as frequent as the availability of these instructional materials seems to warrant.

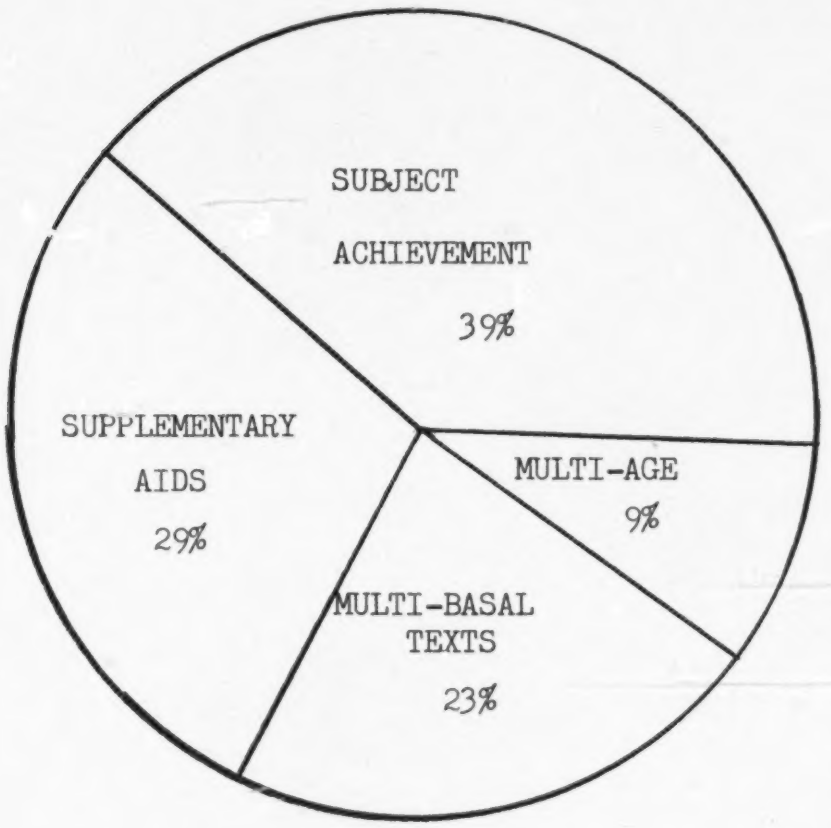
The GUIDELINES FOR A CONTINUOUS PROGRESS PROGRAM prepared by the Nongraded Committee seems to have been well received. The listed developmental skills and concepts for Reading and Mathematics are being used consistently by 63 percent of the teachers. A number of teachers indicated in their comments that prepared skill-lists in other subjects would be most welcome.

FLEXIBILITY

An attempt was made to assess the extent to which the programs in each school allowed for flexibility. In an effort to meet pupils' needs, 65 percent of the teachers are making necessary adjustments in lesson plans. Differentiated assignments showed a 55 percent use by teachers. Teachers were asked to indicate the kinds of grouping that promote flexibility in their programs. The accompanying graph reflects their responses.

The combined total of 3711 tallies for this part of the survey indicated that in some instances several kinds of grouping were being used simultaneously. Although subject achievement is the most widely used factor in grouping, it is evident that multi-basal texts and supplementary aids are becoming increasingly prevalent as promoters of grouping flexibility.

KINDS OF GROUPING USED TO PROMOTE FLEXIBILITY



All but 59 teachers who answered the survey indicated that the Continuous Progress Program was in operation in their classes. No doubt these teachers are involved in subjects other than those considered "nongraded" and, therefore, did not feel that this checklist question applied to them.

SUMMARY OF COMMENTS

Many teachers used this part of the survey to express both favorable and unfavorable comments concerning the Continuous Progress Program. An overwhelming majority stated that there was a more relaxed, more pleasant, more exciting school atmosphere. The few negative criticisms that appeared did not seem to be an objective evaluation of the Continuous Progress Program but were of a personal nature--lack of motivation, disinterested colleagues, absence of volunteer help.

In regard to students' attitudes, teachers' observations listed improved study habits, greater interest in school work, and increased personal responsi-

bility. A great number of teachers wrote that students seemed happier and more enthusiastic about learning. They gave as the reason, a teaching-learning situation which was less rigid and less pressured.

The personal impressions of the teachers who responded were, for the most part, positive. A number of teachers praised the leadership of the principal in securing the cooperation of everyone involved. Other teachers pointed out the necessity of total faculty and community commitment. The success of the program in their school was attributed to these facts. The following comments summarize the thinking of the majority of the teachers:

> "This program has been a professional 'shot in the arm' for me."
>
> "After two years in the Continuous Progress Program I could never go back to the old way of teaching."
>
> "The Continuous Progress Program should have been started years ago."

The over-all view of the comments seems to indicate that teachers feel they have made a good start, but that it is only a start. Requests for help in grouping techniques, scheduling, and reporting pupil progress were numerous. Many teachers asked for guidance in establishing a continuum of skills in subject areas other than Reading and Mathematics.

At this time most teachers are beginning to feel comfortable with the Program. After only two years, great strides have been taken in planning for individual differences and in providing for each student's continuous progress.

STUDENTS

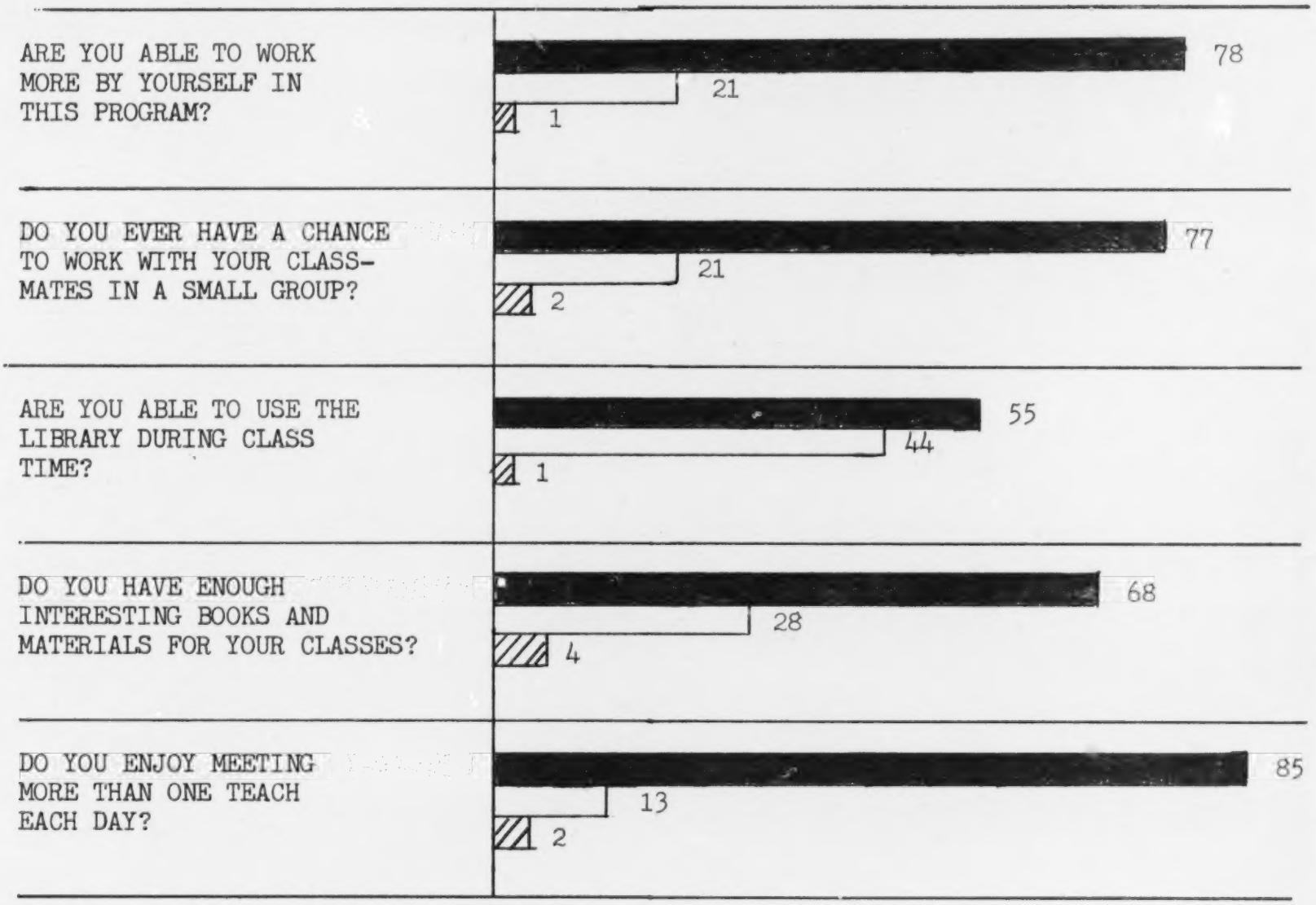
A specific objective of this survey was to determine the reactions of students in regard to the Continuous Progress Program. Students in the intermediate and upper elementary departments were asked to answer a questionnaire which consisted of ten items. Primary students were not included in the study since they had not experienced any other type of program. The responses of 35,950 students were tabulated, studied, and interpreted in the light of the philosophy of the Continuous Progress Program. (See Appendix)

ATTITUDES TOWARD SCHOOL

Analysis of the results reveals that the majority of students claim their interest in school has increased since the initiation of the Continuous Progress Program. They agreed that they received more individual attention; that there are more occasions to work independently; and that there are more opportunities for small group activities.

With the inception of the Continuous Progress Program, it was hoped that the use of the library would increase as would the number and variety of books and materials. Although 69 percent of the students responded that they have enough interesting books and materials for their classes, only 35 percent stated they are able to use the library during class time. Further analysis shows that 85 percent of the students enjoy meeting more than one teacher each day. The accompanying graph illustrates this. That teachers like teaching in a Continuous Progress Program was indicated by 74 percent of the students. Parents, also, generally favor the program since 67 percent of the students' responses indicated this.

ATTITUDES TOWARD SCHOOL



% OF RESPONDENTS INDICATING POSITIVE REACTION

% OF RESPONDENTS INDICATING NEGATIVE REACTION

% NOT RESPONDING

REPORT CARD

Students' attitudes concerning the new report cards were questioned. In regard to the present written report, 50 percent are in favor of it and 49 percent oppose it. Many students feel the MARKED, EXPECTED, and LITTLE progress markings (M-E-L) do not give them sufficient information about their status in different areas of the curriculum. However, the greater number of students expressed appreciation for being evaluated as individuals.

A number of principals graphed the students' responses according to years in school. These tabulations give evidence of the degree of acceptance of the report card at each successive year.

Year in School	Attitudes Concerning the Report Card
4	Very accepted
5	Accepted
6	Questioned
7	Doubted
8	Non-accepted

It was interesting to note that the reactions of the students in the fourth and fifth years of school were more positive than those in the sixth, seventh, and eighth years. This same trend seems to flow through all the items on the questionnaire.

Judging from the comments students made, the voicing of parental attitude and sentiment becomes stronger at each succeeding year. This voicing did not necessarily sound out the student's own attitude, but it seems to echo the attitude of the home.

SUMMARY OF COMMENTS

In addition to the ten items, comments concerning the Continuous Progress Program were requested. Results from these indicate that many students expressed a keen interest in the program because:

"It provides more freedom to work at our own rate."

"The program pertains more closely to me."

"No child can say he or she is smarter."

"It doesn't make the slower student feel inferior."

"I can work with people at my own level."

"There is not as much tension."

The report card ranked highest in the area of dislikes. Following are a few typical comments:

"I don't like the report card because I don't understand it."

"I don't think it really tells you how good or bad you are doing."

"I don't like the M-E-L."

"The marking is at the discretion of teachers."

From these observations the committee feels justified in concluding that during the past two years most students have reacted to change in a positive way. From the large number of favorable responses to small group work and independent activities, it is evident that provisions are being made to meet the needs of the individual student. It is also evident that the school atmosphere has become more conducive to learning. Students are displaying greater interest in school work since unhealthy pressures are being eliminated and challenges are being provided.

The report card was rejected by 49 percent of the student population in the study. This is no reason to justify change. It would seem to indicate a need to educate the students in the philosophy of the report card which stresses the dignity of the individual and which endeavors to give an evaluation of the student's progress in relation to his ability. With a better understanding of the report cards and more emphasis on the value of the parent-teacher conferences, students may be more willing to accept the evaluation of their progress.

PARENTS

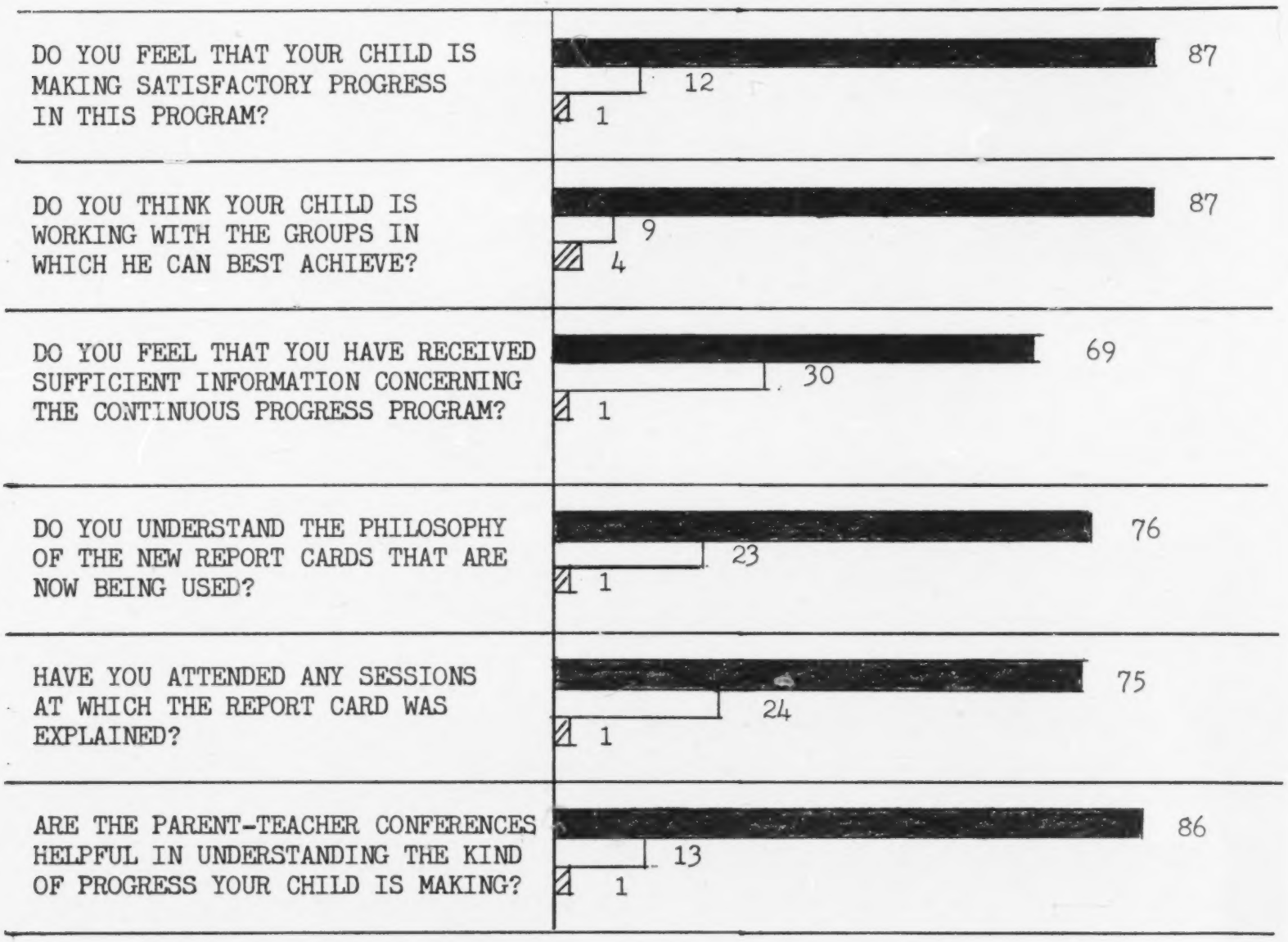
Parental awareness and understanding are essential to the success of every school program. There have always been strong indications of parental interest in nongrading. Large numbers of parents attended the diocesan meetings at which the philosophy and the mechanics of the nongraded school were presented. Parent education has continued at the local level through formal and informal meetings and through written communication. The response of 23,680 parents to this questionnaire indicates a continued desire to participate in a program that so vitally concerns their child.

PROGRAM EVALUATION

The majority of the parents who responded indicated that their child has shown greater interest in school work since the initiation of the Continuous Progress Program. It is the feeling of 87 percent of the parents that satisfactory progress is being made, and that their child is working with groups in which he can best achieve. According to the majority of the parents, the children are happier in school. To the question, "Are homework assignments geared to your child's ability and achievement levels?" 90 percent of the parents gave an affirmative response. According to 70 percent of the parents, the program fosters independence in study habits. That their children have shown satisfactory progress and greater interest in school work, probably accounts for the fact that parents have experienced less tension connected with school, as is indicated by the greater number of responses. The accompanying graph illustrates these findings.

The majority of the parents feel that they are well informed concerning the school program. Most agreed that home-school communication has improved and that their interest in the total school program has increased.

ATTITUDES TOWARD THE CONTINUOUS PROGRESS PROGRAM


DO YOU FEEL THAT YOUR CHILD IS MAKING SATISFACTORY PROGRESS IN THIS PROGRAM?
87
12
1
DO YOU THINK YOUR CHILD IS WORKING WITH THE GROUPS IN WHICH HE CAN BEST ACHIEVE?
87
9
4
DO YOU FEEL THAT YOU HAVE RECEIVED SUFFICIENT INFORMATION CONCERNING THE CONTINUOUS PROGRESS PROGRAM?
69
30
1
DO YOU UNDERSTAND THE PHILOSOPHY OF THE NEW REPORT CARDS THAT ARE NOW BEING USED?
76
23
1
HAVE YOU ATTENDED ANY SESSIONS AT WHICH THE REPORT CARD WAS EXPLAINED?
75
24
1
ARE THE PARENT-TEACHER CONFERENCES HELPFUL IN UNDERSTANDING THE KIND OF PROGRESS YOUR CHILD IS MAKING?
86
13
1

▬ % OF RESPONDENTS INDICATING POSITIVE REACTION

▭ % OF RESPONDENTS INDICATING NEGATIVE REACTION

▨ % NOT RESPONDING

REPORTING PROCEDURES

Meetings at which the new report cards were explained were attended by 75 percent of those who responded. The majority of parents indicated that they understand the philosophy of the new report card and have received sufficient information concerning the Continuous Progress Program. It can be concluded from the comments, however, that there is need for further explanation. Although 85 percent of the parents find the parent-teacher conferences helpful in understanding the child's progress, they do not believe that conferences should take the place of the written report. A strong 80 percent indicated that they do not want to see the written report card eliminated. (See Appendix)

SUMMARY OF COMMENTS

Many of the parents who wrote comments expressed positive changes in the school attitudes of their children. They attributed the differences to emphasis on the child's needs.

The only strongly negative responses concerned the report cards. The greatest misinterpretation seemed to arise from the M-E-L code used in the marking system. Some parents strongly favor marks that show comparisons between and among pupils such as A, B, C or percents. However, a program that concentrates on the uniqueness of the individual and the meeting of his needs cannot follow such a procedure.

At this time it seems that the majority of parents have been able to transfer knowledge of their child's differences from the familiar family setting to the unfamiliar setting of the classroom. With continued efforts in adult education at both Diocesan and local levels, a much better understanding of the program will be realized.

RECOMMENDATIONS: A LOOK AHEAD

The objectives for the Continuous Progress Program in the Diocese of Pittsburgh were realized to an extensive degree during the past two years. Although the results have been gratifying, there are some findings that cannot pass by unnoticed. The following recommendations have evolved from the study which has just been completed.

PHILOSOPHY OF THE CONTINUOUS PROGRESS PROGRAM

1. Develop a more exact use of terms connected with the program:

   A. Level .....a letter-designated segment of concepts and skills in the Reading and the Mathematics programs intended to promote continuous progress in academic achievement

   B. Skill .....a pupil-oriented developmental task in the Reading and Mathematics programs which builds on the knowledge and the understanding gained from previous academic achievement

   C. Expected Progress ....achievement that is commensurate with a student's ability

   D. Marked Progress.....achievement that is exceptional for the ability of a particular student

   E. Little Progress .....achievement that is less than can reasonably be expected of a particular student

2. Expand grouping procedures to permit greater flexibility in providing for students' needs and interests.

3. Remove vestiges of grade labels on classroom doors, in everyday speech, on reports to the Schools Office, in any publicity given to the school.

4. Incorporate a variety of horizontal structure techniques such as independent study, pupil-team learning, and small group activities with the vertical structure which emphasizes continuous progress.

CURRICULUM

1. Extend the continuum of skills for the Reading program to include a Language Arts block.

2. Encourage Science, Social Studies, and other subject area teachers to consruct a continuum of skills consistent with the philosophy of the Continuous Progress Program.

3. Use the library every day as a resource center, an independent study area, a leisure time reading room.

4. Develop a centrally located instructional and multi-media materials center in each school.

COMMUNICATION

1. Conduct a yearly orientation session for parents of students who are new in the system.

2. Give periodic progress reports of the entire program at PTG Meetings, through school bulletins, at department meetings.

3. Increase understanding of the Continuous Progress Program among students through assemblies and discussion periods.

4. Develop awareness of the Continuous Progress Program in the local civic community through the use of news media.

REPORTING PUPIL PROGRESS

1. Re-emphasize reporting as a process through which parents are informed of the personal progress of the student rather than of his comparison to a group.

   A. Stress that Expected Progress is that which can reasonably be expected of a child.

   B. Provide parents with a list of skills for the Reading and the Mathematics levels at which the child is working.

2. Improve parent-teacher conference procedures.

   A. Schedule private interviews with a definite date, time, and place.

   B. Allow no more than one school day a semester for parent-teacher conferences.

IN-SERVICE TRAINING

1. Conduct annual sessions for teachers who are new in the system.

2. Plan sessions in centralized locations to explain and discuss:

grouping
scheduling
levels and skills
reporting and recording.

Despite the weaknesses that have been encountered, there is great satisfaction with the program. As the completion of the second year approaches, it is possible to cite many tangible gains and many rewarding experiences. These will be the incentive to keep the Continuous Progress Program moving forward in the years to come.

CONCLUSION

Educators are continually being challenged to provide a school setting that is innovative and stimulating. However, the rate of change in our space age has made it more difficult to inaugurate programs that are both boldly contemporary and educationally superlative. Even in a slower paced society, changes do not just happen. To be productive of good, they must be carefully planned and expertly executed.

In our Diocese during the past two years, we experienced both the sufferings and the joys of educational change. We dared to act on the principle that children, like fingerprints, are all different. The Continuous Progress Program is an attempt to live out the belief that no two students are exactly alike.

The dramatic changes that have taken place in most of our schools never could have occurred without the dedicated and total involvement of everyone in the system. School Superintendents and School Board members gave encouragement by their strong support of the program. Supervisors and administrators committed many painstaking hours of work to organizational restructuring and to curriculum development. Teachers spent precious time grouping and regrouping students, scheduling and rescheduling subjects, testing, recording, and evaluating in an effort to provide that flexibility which would adequately meet the needs of all students and assure their continuous progress. Students and parents eagerly listened to explanations and actively participated in the program. The Nongraded Committee gratefully acknowledges the genuine interest and the untiring effort of all these wonderful people.

As the dream of recognizing, accepting, and planning for the needs of each student continues to unfold, it is good to reflect on the words of L. J. Cardinal Suenens, "Happy those who dream and are ready to pay the price to make them become true!" The Continuous Progress Program has begun to materialize in our Diocese because superintendents, supervisors, administrators, teachers, students, and parents have been willing not only to dream, but also to work so that the dream could become a reality.

APPENDIX

CONTINUOUS PROGRESS SURVEY SUPERVISORS CHECKLIST

NAME _____

DIRECTIONS: CHECK THE COLUMN THAT BEST DESCRIBES YOUR RESPONSE.

		Most cases	Some cases	No difference
1.	Do the teachers with whom you work understand the philosophy of the Continuous Progress Program?	11	5	2
2.	Has the variety of techniques being used in the area of grouping improved since the initiation of the program?	15	3	
3.	Is there a greater variety of instructional materials used in the presentation of lessons?	14	4	
4.	Do faculty attitudes show a concern for the needs of each student?	15	3	
5.	Are teachers happier in this program?	7	11	
6.	Do you find that students are developing a greater sense of responsibility for their own learning?	8	10	
7.	Have teachers found the parent-teacher conferences helpful in communicating students' progress?	16	2	
8.	Are teachers interpreting the report cards in the light of the philosophy of the Continuous Progress Program?	11	7	
9.	Do you think teachers would like to see the written report card eliminated?	15	3	
10.	Would teachers profit from further in-service sessions if these were made available?	15	3	

11. If in-service sessions were provided, which type would be most helpful:
    - a. Diocesan — a. ____
    - b. Centralized areas — b. 15
    - c. Local school — c. 11

12. If in-service sessions were provided, which topics should be discussed:
    - a. Philosophy — a. 7
    - b. Grouping — b. 14
    - c. Scheduling — c. 13
    - d. Levels and Skills — d. 16
    - e. Use of materials — e. 10
    - f. Evaluating — f. 13
    - g. Reporting and recording — g. 9
    - h. Other (list) — h. 0

COMMENTS: List strengths and/or weaknesses of the program in your schools.

Total Number Responding: 18

CONTINUOUS PROGRESS SURVEY — ADMINISTRATORS CHECKLIST

SCHOOL _____ ADDRESS _____

ENROLLMENT _____ DIRECTORY NUMBER _____

DIRECTIONS: In each of the following items check the answer that best describes your response.

CURRICULUM	YES	NO	NO RESPONSE
1. Is the Continuous Program operating in your school?	1. 188	2	0
If YES, check program initiation date:			
a. Since September, 1970 — a. 13			
b. Since September, 1969 — b. 136			
c. Prior To September, 1969 — c. 39			
2. Do you have ready information concerning the levels each teacher is handling?	2. 172	16	2
3. Are you kept informed of pupil movement within groups and among classes?	3. 176	8	6
4. Are instructional materials in your school being used to their best advantage?	4. 138	48	4
5. Do you have an instructional materials center?	5. 118	66	6
6. Is class scheduling flexible enough to provide for the needs of all students?	6. 156	31	3
Who constructed the schedule(s)?			
Principal-17 Teachers-57 Principal & Teachers-111			5
7. Is there a copy of the GUIDELINES FOR THE CONTINUOUS PROGRESS PROGRAM in the hands of each teacher?	7. 155	35	0
8. Do you devote time at faculty meetings to discuss the implementation of the Continuous Progress Program?	8. 178	9	3

COMMUNICATION

1. Have you provided annual faculty in-service sessions for the Continuous Progress Program?	1. 124	62	4
2. Have you made literature on Continuous Progress Programs available to the faculty?	2. 172	18	0
3. Have you conducted annual orientation sessions for the parents of new students?	3. 78	107	5
4. Have you kept parents supplied with information concerning the progress of the program in your school?	4. 168	22	0
If YES, check ways:			
a. PTG Meetings — a. 123			
b. Bulletins for parents — b. 95			
c. Conferences — c. 169			
d. News media — d. 17			
e. Nongraded pamphlets — e. 83			
f. Others--Church bulletins, tapes, movies, Open House, School Committee			
5. Has an effort been made to provide the students with information concerning the program?	5. 148	37	5

EVALUATION		YES	NO	NO RESPONSE
1. Are the standardized tests necessary for the evaluation of the Continuous Program?	1.	108	75	7
2. Would you like to have the option of administering the standardized tests at your own discretion?	2.	156	24	10
3. Do your teachers use any type of tests to determine the degree of skill-mastery at a particular level?	3.	187	0	3
If YES, Please check which ones:				
a. teacher made	a.	149		
b. Mastery tests (Mathematics)	b.	131		
c. Basic reader tests	c.	160		
d. prepared Level tests	d.	122		
e. Others--Diagnostic, Survey, Inventory, Standardized Tests				
4. Do you see the marks on the report card as an evaluation of a student's achievement in relation to his ability?	4.	107	77	6
5. Do you believe that the faculty has a good understanding of the philosophy of the report cards?	5.	125	63	2
6. Do the parents have a good understanding of the philosophy of the report cards?	6.	54	134	2
7. Have parent-teacher conferences added to the effectiveness of the Continuous Progress Program?	7.	166	23	1
8. Are parents well enough informed about the program that written report cards can be eliminated?	8.	45	142	3

COMMENTS: (School atmosphere; Faculty and student attitudes; Personal impressions)

CONTINUOUS PROGRESS SURVEY — PROFESSIONAL STAFF CHECKLIST

NAME _____ YEARS EXPERIENCE _____

DEPARTMENT (check) PRIMARY_____ INTERMEDIATE____ UPPER ELEMENTARY _____

DIRECTIONS: In each of the following items check the colum that best describes your response.

		Always	Usually	At times	Never	No Response
PROVISION FOR INDIVIDUAL DIFFERENCES						
1. Do you attempt to determine the strengths and weaknesses of each pupil?	1.	1030	904	63	5	9
2. Are the skills and concepts introduced on the basis of individual needs?	2.	411	1188	326	8	78
3. Do you provide opportunities for individual pupils to pursue problems and projects on the basis of special interest and/or need?	3.	342	889	644	27	109
4. Do you base introduction of a skill or concept on your observation and/or diagnosis of performance?	4.	634	1016	196	10	155
5. In which of these ways have your personalized instruction? Please check:	5.					
a. Independent Study — a.___ How Often?	a.	231	395	805	28	552
b. One-to-one Basis — b.___ How often?	b.	122	271	976	48	594
c. Pupil-Teams (2-6 students) — c.___ How often?	c.	174	381	776	60	620
d. Small Group (10-12 students) — d.___ How often?	d.	399	553	525	60	474
e. Large Groups (whole class) — e.___ How often?	e.	170	534	685	47	575
CONTINUOUS PROGRESS						
1. Are individual pupils given opportunities to work at their own instructional levels in various subject areas?	1.	432	892	412	47	228
2. Are there opportunities for pupils to forge ahead in areas where they have special strengths?	2.	431	841	572	47	120
3. Have special adjustments been made for pupils who need an extended period of time at any given level?	3.	417	756	592	85	161
4. Does your program provide sufficient time to know each pupil well enough before the decision is made to move him to another level or to another teacher?	4.	935	756	157	38	125
5. Do you evaluate pupil progress in terms of personal progress rather than upon the use of symbols and remarks based on group standards?	5.	984	738	116	28	145
6. Do you ever feel that the written report card should be eliminated?	6.	533	175	664	460	179

		Always	Usually	At times	Never	No Response
INSTRUCTIONAL MATERIALS						
1. Is your range of instructional materials wide enough to meet the varying needs of each pupil?	1.	305	954	486	117	149
2. Do you use multi-media materials?	2.	270	723	804	52	162
3. Do you use a variety of textbooks over a wide readability range?	3.	369	613	611	213	205
4. Do you use the listed developmental skills and concepts as found in the CONTINUOUS PROGRESS GUIDELINES in order to avoid gaps in learning?	4.	677	688	313	101	232
FLEXIBILITY						
1. Do your lesson plans show necessary adjustments to meet pupils' individual needs?	1.	375	923	458	64	191
2. Do you differentiate assignments to meet the needs of each pupil?	2.	324	792	636	75	184

3. In which of these ways have you promoted flexibility in your groupings? Please check:

a. subject achievement	a. 1431
b. multi-age (chronological)	b. 325
c. multi-basal texts	c. 868
d. variety of supplementary aids	d. 1083
e. Other (list)	e. 4

4. What is the extent of the Continuous Progress Program in your classes? Please check:

a. reading only	a. 202
b. mathematics only	b. 106
c. reading and mathematics	c. 1169
d. Language Arts	d. 188
e. Language Arts and mathematics	e. 122
f. all subjects areas	f. 165
g. none of these	g. 59

COMMENTS: (School atmosphere; Students' attitudes; Personal impressions)

Total Number Responding 2011

CONTINUOUS PROGRESS SURVEY STUDENTS CHECKLIST

NAME (optional) _ YEAR IN SCHOOL _____

This is not a test. The Nongraded Committee in the Diocese would like to know how you feel about the Continuous Progress Program. Answer each question by checking YES or NO.

	YES	NO	NO RESPONSE
1. Has your interest in school work increased since the Continuous Progress Program began?	1. 25196	10154	600
2. Do you feel that you get more individual attention in the Continuous Progress Program?	2. 22646	13106	198
3. Are you able to work more by yourself in this program?	3. 28035	7446	469
4. Do you ever have a chance to work with your classmates in a small group?	4. 27716	7521	713
5. Are you able to use the library during class time?	5. 19817	15935	98
6. Do you have enough interesting books and materials for your classes?	6. 24151	10256	1543
7. Do you enjoy meeting more than one teacher each day?	7. 30500	4808	642
8. Do you like the new report cards?	8. 17960	17700	290
9. Do you think the teachers in your school like teaching in the Continuous Progress Program?	9. 26671	8383	896
10. Do your parents like the Continuous Progress Program?	10. 24057	10092	1801

COMMENTS: What are your likes and/or dislikes concerning the Continuous Progress Program?

LIKES _____

_____

_____

_____

DISLIKES _____

_____

_____

_____

Total Number Responding 35950

CONTINUOUS PROGRESS SURVEY — PARENTS CHECKLIST

NAME (optional) _____

The Nongraded Committee is evaluating the Continuous Progress Program in our Diocese. Will you please participate in this evaluation by checking YES or NO in answer to each question.

	YES	NO	NO RESPONSE
1. Has your child shown greater interest in school work since the initiation of the Continuous Progress Program?	14808	7557	1315
2. Do you feel that your child is making satisfactory progress in this program?	20645	2879	156
3. Do you think your child is working with the groups in which he can best achieve?	20648	1950	1082
4. Are homework assignments geared to your child's ability and achievement levels?	21182	2394	104
5. Do you believe that the Continuous Progress Program fosters independence in study habits?	16604	6048	1028
6. Is your child happier in school since the initiation of the Continuous Progress Program?	15848	6827	1005
7. Have you experienced less tensions connected with school work since your child is in this program?	14414	7691	1575
8. Do you feel that you have received sufficient information concerning the Continuous Progress Program?	16316	7223	141
9. Has home-school communication improved with the Continuous Progress Program?	15107	7246	1327
10. Has your interest in the total school program increased with this new program?	14139	8163	1378
11. Do you understand the philosophy of the new report cards that are now being used?	17911	5503	266
12. Have you attended any sessions at which the report card was explained?	17709	5702	269
13. Would you like to see the written report card eliminated entirely?	3966	19000	719
14. Are the parent-teacher conferences helpful in understanding the kind of progress your child is making:	20314	3058	313

COMMENTS: Will you please give your impressions of the program. If you have any suggestions as to how it can be improved, they will be most welcome.

Total Number Responding 23680